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HISTORY OF BLEE FAMILY AS WRITTEN BY DOLAN BLEE TO HIS SISTER GRACE IN 1951

Dear Sister:

I am O. K. and how are you? Regarding the migration of the older Blee's, I have no dates, but the older boys came first, and landed at Philadelphia, Pa.

That must have been Uncle Jimmie, our Grandfather Charles, Uncle William, and Uncle John. They worked in a stone quarry, and Grandfather Charles became a Marble polisher.

Uncle William got an eye knocked out while working in the quarry, and thereafter wore a patch over that eye. He was known as Patch-eye Blee.

Uncle John became a cab driver in Philadelphia. They saved money and sent for more of the family to come from Ireland. If they all came over, I do not know.

Uncle Jimmie met one of the cotton dollies who worked in one of the large cotton mills in Philadelphia. He went with her until he found she was going to have a baby. Then he and Bob Gage went to Pittsburgh, bought a barge of coal, and took it down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans and sold it. They returned to Cincinnati and walked up a trail to Fort Wayne to buy land in the new country.

The Land near Fort Wayne had all been picked over, so they were obliged to look farther away, and they chose the present Blee Homestead.

The price of land was \$1.00 per acre. The land office was in Fort Wayne. The State had been admitted to the Union in 1816, but the counties were not all organized yet.

They each bought 80 acres, laying north and south on each side of the west line of present Blee Homestead, and built a cabin. When it was finished, it was found to be on the Gage property. John McLaughlin told me the date was 1829, but I questioned that later. I think they had followed the canal 12 miles west, then chose the homesite. The canal was in operation in 1836. The Vermillia home, on the Hogg farm, was built before that date.

If you could read the dates on the grave stones like you did when you went to the Hogg school, before Simmers piled the stones in fence corners, cut the trees and plowed the grave yard up.

Vermillia's had a small brick house at the corner of Rd. 24 and the

John Blee  
Tom Cartledge

To  
H



county line. They used it for the hired help and a dairy house. This is where Frank Hatfield built his house.

North of the Gage's 80 acres laid the Phelps farm. Their cabin stood directly north. Which was built first, I do not know. I never saw old man Phelps.

We moved to the Phelps farm in 1884 and was there one year. Kate was born there on February 25th, 1885. It was a good frame house.

Octave Phelps lived there before he was married. His wife was a Decker girl, a sister to Dan Decker. You remember where the Decker farm was. I heard him tell of going to see his girl at the Decker farm when there was no road through Devil's Hollow. It was just a path, and returning home at night, he would carry a burning hickory bark torch to keep the wolves away. He taught school in the early days.

The Bayless and Kelseys were early settlers. After they had bought land and built the cabin in 1829, the next we hear of them is 1841 when they came to the home.

The Blee family built a large cabin east of the barn on the high ground south of Indian Creek. It had a spring near-by. They cleared a tract of ground and planted an orchard. They were fine apples. It was later known as "the old Orchard". I suppose they got the trees and seeds from Johnny Appleseed. I do not know who built the cabin and other buildings. Aunt Mattie, a sister of the Uncles, was the housekeeper. She was around 16 years old then.

I think old Tom McLaughlin and Mary Blee were married before they came out here from Philadelphia. Old John McLaughlin's birth was about 1840. They, Tom McLaughlin's, had four children; John, William, James, and Margaret Crowell. Bill died from consumption when about 30 years old. Dad said the best of the family had died.

Uncle Jimmie and Uncle Tom Blee got a job in a quarry in Wabash. They walked home and back on week-ends.

Uncle Jimmie would buy cattle and hogs from the neighbors and run them in the big woods. Uncle Bill would look after them. That is all he ever did besides carrying the dinner basket to the men working in the timber.

Uncle John worked in the garden and flailed out wheat. There were no thrashing machines.

In the winter, all hands were in the woods. They put the logs on the canal bank. When spring came, the men worked the tree tops into cord wood. The small hickory was cut into hoop poles. There was a boat load of them every spring.

In the spring of 1856, Uncle Jimmie brought Dad and Uncle Johnny Buttons from Philadelphia. They were ten years old. They arrived on Easter Sunday. Uncle Jimmie had to carry Uncle John Buttons all the way from Fort Wayne to the homestead. Dad was James Blee and John was his twin brother. The boys were in a new world. They had never been out of the city. They had never seen cattle, hogs, oxen, and the vast playground. They went to school at the Red School house that stood at the north-east corner at the Broxon cross-road. The religious people used to have church there. Dad and John McLaughlin killed a skunk and put it in the preacher's desk.

The Brick house and the barn were built in the year of 1856. At this time, Aunt Mattie was 31 years old. The brick for the house was made in the bottom north of the creek, and the lumber was sawed by the Kelsey mill that stood by the Indian Creek on the Kelsey place. The mill was operated by water power, and had an up and down saw. They built a dry kiln to dry the walnut lumber which was used to finish the house on the inside.

The Red School House had been moved one mile east on that corner by Dave Kelsey's, on the county line by the Bayless graveyard. It was called College Hill School.

Uncle Jimmie bought more land. In the end, he owned land to the canal from their north line, from the County line to John McLaughlin's, two eighties where Lou Hines place is, two eighties where Lim McKinsie did live, and an eighty north of the Fair Oaks School, where Bill Robins had a saw mill.

They bought whiskey for 16¢ per gallon from the whiskey boat, run by Mike O'Erien. Dennis O'Erien ran the State boat. It was like a section car on the railroad track.

The Lynches lived on the State boat. The priest asked old Tom Lynch

how many children he had and Tom said I am the father of three or supposed to be.

Aunt Mattie kept John Buttons around the house to help with the work, as he wasn't as strong as Dad. Uncle Jimmie took Dad with him to work in the woods and help on the farm. Those two were always together.

Uncle Latham Blee came West later. He helped organize and name the township. He called it Jefferson township.

A while after Uncle Jimmie brought Dad and John Buttons to the homestead, Grandfather and Grandmother Blee came too. Grandfather died in the sixties and Grandmother in 1881. I remember Grandmother Blee quite well. I still have Grandfather's gun that he brought with him. It was made in 1816. It was the only gun in the neighborhood when we lived in the cabin.

Ed McGuire was a son of Aunt Jane Blee who married a McGuire. I never knew her husband, or what became of him. Ed McGuire had a good bringing-up. He was a fine man and well educated. When he came to the Homestead, he began to put things in order. He got a set of books and kept track of their income and expenses. The older Uncles could neither read or write, so they lost money in many deals. But Ed stopped all of that when he came.

Ed wore a plug hat and dress suit and mingled with the best class. It was told that he got into a controversy with a Canolite preacher at the old red school house, about the Catholic church. John McLaughlin tried to get Ed to sit down by pulling on his coat-tail and the tail came off the coat. Ed continued his talk without a coat-tail. Dad and John McLaughlin got even by putting a bull in the school house and leaving him there for several days. The Canolites had their next meeting in the woods.

The Eighty Acres, where Lou Hines lived, belonged to Ed McGuire. It was given to him when he married a girl by the name of Bigue.

Uncle Jimmie and Ed went to the woods to make clapboards to repair a cabin roof. When they cut a tree, it left a large limb hanging above where they had to work. They went home that evening, thinking it would fall during the night. The next morning it was still hanging. They went to work anyway, and down it came, crushing Ed. He died the next day. His wife continued to live with the Uncles until her death. A daughter, Anna, married Ed



Litot. Ed McGuire's death was a great blow to the old Uncles.

When the cotton dolly had her baby, it was a boy. Her grandmother raised him. After the boy got older, the grandmother would tell him of his father in the West. It seems she knew the family in Philadelphia. Her name was Stanley and the boy's name was Jim Stanley.

Jim Stanley was well educated and a sober young man. He was a machinist by trade. He came West to visit. He made himself known to the Uncles. He was taken in and made one of the family. Dad always liked Jim Stanley.

After Grandfather and Grandmother Blee came West, their youngest son, Edward, went to live with Aunt Mary McLaughlin and the other son lived with the Uncle Tom Blee family. The oldest son was Charles. He was a Union soldier in the Civil War. He was wounded in the battle of Gettysburg. Later he married the nurse who took care of him. It took a long time for him to recover from his wounds. When Mother would ask him to go along to church with us, he would say that it was two priests and a doctor who put him where he was. I never knew where that was. ~~He was~~ He was a fine looking man. Six feet, three inches tall and as straight as a ramrod. He had an adopted son named Ed Blee. The last I heard from him and family, they lived in Joliet, Illinois. The son was near the age of Brother Bill, and visited us in 1887.

Dad's brother Ed went to Fort Wayne when he was grown. Willie Schoonbine got him a job as fireman on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Mag Schoonbine was going to make a great man out of him, but he was always in trouble with the engineers. Mag was Ed McGuire's sister. She was the wife of Willie Schoonbine. Willie was the draftsman for the Pennsylvania R. R.

John McLaughlin's wife Kate, named Uncle Ed ~~Daddy~~ Crow and John Blee, Uncle Tom's son, John Dough Belly, those two bummed among the relatives day after day and never worked.

Tom Blee married Bridget Daugherty. She lived with her folks, one mile south of the Arcola church. She came here on a canal boat around 1850. Lait Rogers played the fiddle on the boat to entertain the passengers. Uncle Tom drove a yoke of oxen when he went to see his girl.

Their first cabin was on the north side of the river. That is what we used to call the "Old Place". Later he bought the Kellor place and lived in the old log cabin which we later used for a grainary. They later built a big frame house where Grace was born. Their children were: Maggie, John, James, William and Charles.

Bridget, the Mother, Maggie, William and Jimmie died in 1880 of Typhoid fever. Unclo Bill, Dad's brother lived with the Tom Blee family. He hauled logs for a living, all his life. He shipped logs by the car-load. He always had a good team and rig for the job.

Sister's of Tom Blee's wife, Bridget married Morris Cody and Lillian Baker. Cody's daughter married Henry Fry and one of Baker's daughters married Latham Blee, son of old Uncle Latham. Her name was Mayme Baker. They had three boys, William, Herbert and James. They used to live in Aboite and he operated the saw mill there, about the year 1898.

Uncle John Buttons got his name of "Buttons" when he was quite young. Aunt Mattie made him a coat out of an old Army uniform and used the brass buttons down the front. John Dough Belly attended the Brother's School in Fort Wayne and stayed with Cody's. He drove the pop wagon after school. Becky Cody made the pop. She never married. Morris Cody ran the ice and pop business in Fort Wayne, and Henry Fry ran a tannery between the canal and Main Street west of St. Mary's river. Bakers ran a saw mill near where Superior and Spy Run join.

Mica Galliger was married to a sister of the Old Unoles. If they came west or stayed in Philadelphia, I do not know. I never saw either of them. I do know that there were three boys that were young men before Mother and Dad were married. The Names were Ed, John and Dan, and one daughter, Margaret. The daughter married W. W. Walton in Roanoke. He ran a shoe store there. The Uncles claimed he forged checks on them. They sued and had a trial, but he was acquitted. He joined the Catholic Church when he married Margaret Galliger.

I was to John Galliger's funeral in the early eighties. It was the first time I was to the Catholic cemetery. I don't know what became of Ed Galliger. At the time John was buried, Dan was married and lived in Ossian.

He married Bridget Landrigan from Mahon. They had a large family. The Mother and one of the daughters burned to death in a kitchen fire in their home in Fort Wayne. Some of them still live in Fort Wayne, but I don't know where.

At the time of the Civil War, John and Jim McLaughlin were afraid they would have to go to the service, so they both went to Philadelphia. Jim had all his teeth pulled and John got married and stayed in the East until the war was over. He married Kate Daugherty, no relation to Bridget, Tom Blee's wife. Jim came back and married Caroline Hinen. They raised a large family. Three boys and six daughters. Tom, James, John, Mary, Margaret, Martha, Lizzie, Frances and Alice.

About 1890, John Dough Belly married Mary Kruse of Monroeville. She died within a year after marriage. She was the sister of Father Hartman.

Joe Blee married Mary Kelly around 1901. They had two sons, Paul and Robert.

Dad's twin brother, John married Nancy Clark. They had one son, James, and two daughters, Bernadette and Irma.

Margaret McLaughlin, daughter of Mary Blee McLaughlin and Tom McLaughlin and sister of John McLaughlin, married Dock Crowell. He was a Hottentot. The old folks thought it was a good match, as Dock had lots of land. They went to live on 160 acre farm, mostly woods. It had a small house, no barn, no stock or poultry. Nothing except an old dun horse and fifty swarms of bees. Dock would sit on a bee hive and smoke his pipe. He always wore gum boots. Never took them off until they were worn out. Then he would get a new pair. He would take a sack of wheat on the old dun horse, he would sit on top of the sack of wheat and go to the mill in Roanoke and get it ground into flour. Get back on top of sack of flour and go home, with his gum booted feet and legs dangling on each side. They had four or five children. Hannah was the oldest, then John and Mattio. Hannah married a man named Wolfe, and they lived on the old farm.

Dock and Margaret McLaughlin were married at the Brick House, (The Blee Homestead). Dock had to be baptized. Dan Gallagher and John Buttons were serving Mass. The priest, while pouring water on Dock's head, told the



coys to hold up the basin. John Buttons asked what the priest said and Dan answered, "hold Up the beast".

Mattie Crowell married Bob Norris, and ran away with a doctor shortly after the marriage. Bob Norris chased them all over the State for a week and finally lost track of them and came back home. John, the oldest, still lives out near the old farm. Another boy committed suicide. He was a fine, handsome young man. He used to work on the Bash Farm. Margaret Crowell was a fine person, but she never had a chance in life. She was buried on the Blee lot at the Catholic cemetery in Fort Wayne. Her name can be found on the gravestone there. Father Brummer preached her funeral sermon at the Cathedral in Fort Wayne. He said she was an ignorant country woman, and knew no wrong.

After Tom Blee's folks died in 1880, they hired various house-keepers for more than six years. Uncle Jimmie died in 1884. Jim McLaughlin moved in with the old folks. That lasted for one year. Then Anna McGuire's daughter, Anna and Uncle John lived alone for a couple of years.

Tom Blee had found a lady to keep house. She was from the Arcola parish. She was a widow with one daughter. They owned a forty acre farm, north-west of Arcola. Later they moved to the Brick House (the Blee Homestead). Uncle John gave them 124 acres, with what they already had, it made them 330 acres. Mrs. Kelly and daughter Mary Ann moved with them, and continued to keep house for them. They were very industrious and worked hard to keep things going, but by 1897, both farms were gone. Joe married Mary Ann Kelly and Charles married Mary Blee, his third cousin. We moved on the Tom Blee farm in 1890, and left there in 1898. We moved on our own 65 acres down in the prairie in Whitley County. Uncle John and the McGuires bought property on West Main Street, Fort Wayne. Uncle John died there in 1904. Uncle Tom died at the Brick House in 1899?

Charles Blee, Mary Blee's husband died 1900. They had two daughters, Agnes and Anna.

Joe Blee and Mary Kelly Blee and Mrs. Kelly left the Brick House about 1905. They moved to Fort Wayne. John Dough Belly made his home with them.

James Blee, our father, died in 1934. Kathryn Smith Blee, mother died in 1910. William, second son died in 1935. Martha Blee Sephel, died in 1942. Charles Blee, oldest son, author of this letter, died in 1953. Kathryn Blee Wisely, daughter died in 1960. Another son, Edward, died at the age of five years in 1892.



# THE BLEE FAMILY TREE

BY THE LATE ANNA MAGUIRE LITOT, Oct. 3, 1945

My Great, Great, Grand Parents.

James and Margaret Mahaffy Blee

Their Family: Charles, B-1801-M. Edward B-1803- M. John-B-1811

James-B 1813-William B-1817- Latham B-1815 Thomas-1820

Jane Blee Maguire-B 1799- M. Catherine Blee Gallagher B 1805

Mary Blee McLaughlin B-1807 M. Martha B-1809

Charles Blee Family:

Charles None

William None

Edward None

John-James-Bernadette Blee Homer-Ira-Blee Madden.

James-Charles-William-Mary Blee Ottenseller-Martha Blee Sephel-Margaret Blee

Foster-Catherine Blee Wisely-Rossella Blee Rauner-Grace Blee Mills.

Latham Blee Family:

James Names unknown

Latham-Herbert-William-James

Margaret Blee Hacker-Unknown

Ellen Not M.

Martha

Thomas Blee Family:

Margaret Blee-Not M. 1880

John-W. Mary died in St. Louis-Child birth

James not M. 1880

William 1880

Charles Unknown Agnes Blee Ormsbe & Anna Blee Herber

Josch-Robert-Paul

Anthony and Jane Blee Maguire Family:

Margaret Maguire Schoenbino Albert

Edward Maguire Anna Maguire Litot

Catherine Blee Gallagher Family:

Margaret Gallagher Walton

Ellen Gallagher Curry

Martha Gallagher

Daniel Gallagher

John Gallagher

Mary Blee McLaughlin Family:

Margaret McLaughlin Crouel

John-Thomas-William-James-Mary McLaughlin Tegtmeyer

James-Thomas-John-James-Margaret McLaughlin Sorg-Martha McLaughlin Suelzer

Elizabeth McLaughlin Barkdol-Joe McLaughlin Clark-Caroline-Frances.

Edward Blee is reported married but no record on his family.

Four of the eleven not married

All senior members born in Ireland, all *Saint Patrick, Drogda, Ireland*

My mother, the late Anna M. Litot, wrote this family tree for me, at age 78 Yrs.

This copy written by John G. Litot-41 South Wayne Aven. Fort Wayne, Ind

3-11-61.

John P.

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ACPL







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